of Air India. These issues are (i) Promotion of the female air-hostesses to the grade of In-flight Supervisor; (ii) Total inter-changeability of job functions between the male and female Cabin Crew;(iii) Flexibility of working conditions as per the discretion of the Management; (iv) Merger of *inter-se* seniority between the two cadres; and (v) Annual medical check-up for female Cabin Crew.

The Management of Air India in its Administrative Order dated 27.12.2005, has permitted female cabin crew to be promoted to the post of In-flight Supervisor, subject to suitability. Subsequent to issuance of this order, the Executive Cabin Crew filed a Writ Petition in the Delhi High Court (Writ Petition No. 2172 of 2006) against the same Order. While admitting the petition, the Hon'ble Court passed an interim order dated 6th January, 2006 by virtue of which the Management had implemented positioning of female executive cabin crew as In-flight Supervisor. However, against the aforesaid order of the Single Judge, two more Petitions have been filed before the Delhi High Court, who has directed all parties to negotiate in the matter and also to maintain *a status quo*.

The remaining issues will be discussed by Air India Management with Air India Cabin Crew Association as these are incidental to Petitions/ Appeal before the Delhi High Court.

Compassionate appointments in banks

1499. SHRI C. PERUMAL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether appointments in banks on compassionate grounds is not practised;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether National Organisation of Bank Workers has urged to restore compassionate appointments;and

(d) if so, what is Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Hon'ble Supreme Court, in the case of Umesh Kumar Nagpal *Vs.* the State of Haryana [JT 1994 (3) SC 525], in 1994, has, *inter-alia* held that as a rule, appointment in the public services should be made strictly on the basis of open invitation of application and merit. In implementation of the norms laid down by the Hon'ble Supreme Court, a Model Scheme for payment of ex-gratia (lump-sum amount) in lieu of compassionate appointment was circulated by the

Indian Banks' Association (IBA) to all the Public Sector Banks (PSBs) on 31.07.2004 which has since been adopted by all the 27 PSBs.

(c) IBA has reported that it received a notice dated 23.01.2006 from the United Forum of Bank Unions (a consistent unit of 5 workmen unions) about its decision to go on nation wide strike on 9th March, 2006 in support of its demand for restoration of compassionate appointment scheme in banks.

(d) The above issue was never a matter for discussion/negotiation at the industry level. The scheme is a non-statutory one and as such, is not enforceable. It also does not form part of service conditions and cannot be claimed as a matter of right by any employee. Non of the rights of the employees is violated by the banks switching over to a scheme of monetary assistance *in lieu* of appointment on compassionate grounds and therefore, no industrial dispute can lie in the matter.

Growth rate of economy

1500. SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the Confederation of Indian Industry has anticipated economy growth of over 7 per cent in the fiscal 2005-06;

(b) if so, what is the actual growth of economy in the first three quarters of 2005-06, *i.e.* from 1st April to 31st December, 2005;

(c) what is the estimated economy growth predicted by Government during 2005-06; and

(d) what is the projected growth during 2006-07?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) The Confederation of Indian Industry in its "State of the Economy–January 2006" expects the Indian economy to register Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of above 8 per cent in 2005-06 at 1999-2000 prices.

(b) As per the data released by the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO), the growth in GDP at factor cost at 1999-2000 prices in the first three quarters of 2005-06, *i.e.*, from 1st April to 31st December, 2005 is estiamted at 7.9 per cent.

(c) As per the advance estiamtes released by the CSO, the real GDP growth in 2005-06 is estimated at 8.1 per cent.